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AN
APPEAL to the PUBLIC
ON BEHALF OF
CAMERIA.

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ON BEHALF OF

C A M E R I A ,

A YOUNG LADY,

WHO WAS ALMOST RUINED

BY THE BARBAROUS

TREATMENT OF

HER OWN MOTHER.

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THE following piece appeared in the
Edinburgh Evening Post of the 4th
of March; as it bears a lively re-
semblance to the manner of the late
admirable DEAN SWIFT, and contains
some striking allegorical passages, it
is hoped that it will afford the Reader
some rational entertainment.

Excerpt from Beechey

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AN
APPEAL to the PUBLIC
ON BEHALF OF
CAMERIA,

TO THE PUBLIC.

REL^YING upon that regard for justice and compassion for the distressed, which are characteristic of Englishmen ; I am encouraged to publish an account of my sufferings, in hopes that the public may conceive a better opinion of me, after being truly informed of my case. I am but a young woman, yet I have experienced such a train of persecution and calumny as few have endured in the course of a very long life ;
and

and so violent are the prejudices that have been raised against me, that I can scarcely expect a fair hearing. I have been called whore, b—h, jade, monster of ingratitude, and in short the most opprobrious names in the world, by those whom I never injured, and even by many whom I have raised from beggary to opulence. If it were in my power to state my case to you, without mentioning the author of my wrongs, the ties of blood and a regard to decency would incline me to do so. But, alas! my story is no secret, and all the world knows, or at least *may* know, that the person who has long persecuted me and sought my utter ruin, is MY OWN MOTHER.

I need not mention to you the calumnies she has raised against me; or take notice that she has shewn herself equally an enemy to my person, my character, and my possessions. If I had behaved undutifully or ungratefully, what

I have suffered might have been considered as just punishments, or at least, as the effects of parental resentment provoked by real offences; but you will be surprised, when I assure you, that my present misfortunes arise solely from the deplorable state of my mother's *intellects*, and the suggestions of those worthless people to whom she has intrusted the management of her affairs.

My mother, to do her justice, was once what is called a *notable* woman, and by her skill in housewifery and attention to the interests of her family, had acquired a tolerably good reputation. But being naturally very proud, and prone to quarrel on the slightest occasions, it was no easy matter to live with her, as she was perpetually scolding at somebody or other. Though she pretended to great wisdom, she had but weak intellects and was constantly under the dominion of some worthless favourite. She has been several times in danger of losing all that
she

she had in the world by this foolish humour, but there is no curing of her. When I left the family, her favourite was an old *Chaplain*, who by his meannesses and fulsome flattery got so great an ascendant over her, that he became a perfect tyrant in the family ; but it was in vain to complain of him, as she authorised all his oppressions, and considered him as little less than infallible. He would often cause the children and servants to be whipped, and confined in a dark room, on pretence that we had made wry faces at prayers, or been indistinct in our responses. He made us kneel, wheel, stand, or sit at his pleasure, like a file of musketeers, and affirmed that much of our devotion consisted in these apostish tricks. At the same time he obliged us to play at football on Sundays, and when any dared to object to it, as an unsuitable appendage to the service of the day, he would hear no remonstrances, but made a standing order in the family that every body should be turned out of doors, who would not do just as he would have him.

Being

Being a GIRL OF SPIRIT, and unable to digest these daily affronts, and at the same time observing that the stubbornness of my mother's temper afforded me no prospect of redress, I at last resolved to leave the family and try my fortune elsewhere. For this purpose I associated myself with those of the family who had suffered like wrongs, and settled on a *common* at a great distance, to which my mother pretended some right, though from the doubtfulness of her title, she had never bestowed one farthing on the premises. Here I had great difficulties to struggle with, but having now found liberty and tranquility, I bore every thing with patience, preferring the most obscure and penurious situation, to the miseries I had formerly endured. By keeping a correspondence with my former friends, and representing to them the advantages of liberty, I drew many of them to come and reside with me, and their assistance was of great advantage, by enabling me to clear my farm ; and provide us with the conveniences of life.

But

But while I advanced in prosperity, my mother, by listening to evil counsellors, was going fast to ruin, and preparing the means of our common destruction.—From her quarrelsome temper, she was frequently engaged in *pleas*, which proved very expensive, and the insolence of her behaviour is daily raising her new enemies. To support her extravagance she was obliged to borrow from her tenants and servants, and ran very deep in debt. At this time she became much addicted to drinking which gradually impaired her understanding. The high premium she gave, procured her great command of money, which she never thought of paying, and by contriving to be always in cash, she sometimes got the better of her neighbours, though at so extravagant an expence, that it would have been much better for her to have been foiled in her quarrels, than to have gained in the manner she did.

As she never wanted a crowd of knaves, gamblers, sharpers, and pickpockets about her,
they

they contrived among them a new method of keeping up her spirits and conducting her to her ruin in the gayest manner. They circulated her bills among them for ready money, and these, though intrinsically worth nothing, and commonly sold at a discount, created an artificial appearance of wealth in her family. By preserving in circulation these ghosts of departed sums my mother came to imagine, that she had lost nothing, and even to esteem herself so much the richer in proportion as she run the more in debt. In this foolish conceit, her servants constantly flattered her, and being perpetually dosed by drinking, she easily believed them. Her yearly rents being mortgaged to usurers for defraying the charges of her former extravagance, she had nothing left to support her, but the most rigorous exactions on her tenants, for which she was every year inventing new pretences. Thus though possessed of a revenue that might have enabled her to live in opulence and independence, she had not a farthing except

except what was raised by the most shameful extortion.

It had been an ancient custom in the manor, that a council of the tenants should be annually called to consult for the common interest. By giving them ill language, and keeping them engaged about trifles, she contrived to weary them; and after long attendance would set them about their business before they had done anything of any moment. To lessen their trouble and to avoid the like mortifications in future she got them advised to send a few of their number, who had least business at home, and to these the common concerns were entrusted. By tampering with these, she got them to promote her designs and divided with them the spoils, which by their assistance she had extorted from the rest. But as there were some difficulties in this method, she contrived another, which most effectually answered her purpose. On pretence of easing the tenants of their labour in attending the common

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common concerns of the manor, and pretending a great regard to their interests, she contrived to get her menial servants chosen as representatives of her tenants. When she had now no body to deal with except her own *coachmen, cooks, footmen, dog-keepers, and turnspits*, she no longer kept any bounds in her exactions; and the usurers she employed, furnished her with money at exorbitant interest. In order to satisfy their demands, she had recourse to the most odious methods of oppression; but her tenants being mostly a thoughtless and stupid generation, took little notice of the matter, for a long time, being scarce capable of distinguishing between *real* and *apparent* wealth. As they owed immense sums to one another, they never reflected on the impossibility of their being paid, but lived in all the appearances of real wealth by transferring desperate debts as ready money to each other.

The constant circulation of this imaginary property in an endless succession of fools, made
every

every individual secure as to himself, finding so easy an opportunity of getting rid of it to greater fools than themselves. But as the most stupid of mankind will think sometimes, some murmurings occasionally arose on this head, which was not very easy to answer. At last my mother's managers gave her to understand, that she had still one resource remaining. As my estate was now brought into tolerable order, though without the least expence on her part, everything I had from her costing me at least double the value, they told her that as I had grown up to wealth under her tuition, nothing was more reasonable than that my estate should be mortgaged for the payment of her debts.

To give some colour to this pretence, it was asserted, that these debts had been contracted on my account, because forsooth, my mother had bestowed some expence in ejecting a neighbouring gentleman, who had settled on a part of the same common, and had actually given me great disturbance

disturbance *on my mother's account*.—As her family derived great benefit from my estate, she was too mindful of her own interest, not to give me proper assistance ; but I derived no other benefit from it than being rid of a troublesome neighbour ; while my mother acquired a large estate, on which great expence had already been bestowed. I was still obliged to sell the whole produce of my farm to my mother's family, and to take everything I wanted from her at her own price. I had long submitted to this, in order to show my regard to my mother, though she had used me very indifferently, and though I knew that I could purchase every thing cheaper from my neighbours. This compliance in the end has cost me very dear, as my mother, finding her advantage by the bargain, and being continually pressed by her necessities, and the extravagance of her servants, omitted no method by which she could cheat me, or procure money for continuing her mad career. She began to talk in a high strain of *parental authority*, and pretended,

that

that the acquisition of children, even after they were *foris familiated*, continued to be the property of the parents ; and that a mother had the power of *life* and *death* over her children. I did not at first observe the drift of all this senseless rant. But my mother having got a most worthless and covetous fellow for her *steward*, who was perpetually contriving lies to irritate her against me, he devised a plot of seizing my estate by force, and massacring or ejecting my family. An old ROMAN CONJURER, to whom my mother, when *in liquor* had once made a *deed of gift* of her whole estate, was at the bottom of this business, though he did not care to shew himself in it, on account of his being greatly *hated* in the family. Her steward was in constant correspondence with this conjurer ; and, by his interest with my mother, bestowed on him a *rent charge* on sundry parts of her estate ; and among others on that, which, by my aid, she had so lately acquired in my neighbourhood ; in hopes of enabling the conjurer, by degrees, to recover the whole estate at last.

In

In the meantime my mother's managers were constantly spreading ill reports against me, and whispering, that I had a design, in concert with my friends, to murder my mother; though such a thing never entered into my thoughts. But in public my mother pretended the sincerest regard for me and invited me to drink a dish of TEA with her, in token of friendship, which was the only time she had treated me in that manner. While she recommended her tea, (though I have been since informed, that it was worth nothing,) and endeavoured to make me sensible how great honour she did me, she gravely hinted, that she expected I would support a number of worthless people, the refuse of her family, whom she intended to send over to me for that purpose, I modestly declined the proposal, telling her I was not much given to *tea-drinking*, and would rather want it, than procure it at such an exorbitant rate. The matter having taken air in my family, somebody accidentally *overturned the teapot*, on which my mother having got drunk with
some

some liquor she had from the *old conjurer*, flew into a violent passion, swore a number of horrid oaths, and vowed the most cruel revenge against me, unless I submitted to her will, and pay her an enormous price for the tea she had offered me. I replied, that as the *treat* was entirely unfolicited on my part, I thought it strange to be obliged to pay for an entertainment which I had neither asked nor tasted, and begged she should make me no more offers of that sort. Upon this she swore I was an *ungrateful jade*, and that she would teach me my duty by *force*, as I was not to be moved with reason.

Soon after she sent over a number of sharpers, bullies, pick pockets, housebreakers, and such kind of cattle, who at first modestly asking lodging, were readily received; but they soon put off the mask of friendship by pretending a right to my whole estate, stealing my cattle, spoiling my corns, burning my woods, and farm houses, and murdering all who offered to resist them. When
driven

driven from one part of the farm, they attacked another, and have over run at different times a considerable part of my estate, burning and slaying wherever they came, and glorying in the most infamous and barbarous actions. Instead of being displeased at these doings, nothing gives my mother greater pleasure, than to hear of the injuries done me by her blackguards ; and she has often been heard say, she would be glad to see my heart's blood, and the death of all my family at once. When her people have burnt me a barn, plundered a warehouse, murdered a game-keeper, or stole a herd of *cattle*, she shews the most barbarous exultation, and orders all her family to get drunk *at their own charges*, by way of thanksgiving for these *heroic* actions as she calls them. Nay so much is she set on my destruction, that her pride and wrath have actually turned her brain, with the help of the conjurer's liquor, which she not only drinks to great excess herself, but distributes largely among her domestics, which has made them as mad as their mistress.

Nothing

Nothing is now to be heard in her family but roaring, swearing, cursing, and threatenings of death and destruction to me and all my friends and family. None can gain her favour any other way, than by coining lies against my reputation, or contriving plans for my destruction. She has regularly every year predicted that she would make an end of me, but finding herself disappointed, she turns quite frantic, curses her servants, and swears they are a parcel of *cowardly* rogues and traitors, else they would have got me murdered long ago. She is always dreaming of my death, and has often given large rewards to pedlers and gypsies for bringing her *false news* of my ruin. Instead of resenting the deceit when discovered, she will allow no body to talk to her, unless they deceive her, and the oftener they do so, they are the more welcome. She has been at incredible pains and cost in order to ruin me, and yet she grudges no expence for that purpose. Her friends dare not tell her that she is ruining herself, though she must soon come to her last shilling.

In

In her raving fits she sometimes says, that she considers my ruin as necessary for her own existence, and whatever she says, her servants *must believe*, on pain of being considered as rogues and traitors; which is very dangerous, especially since she has resumed her correspondence with the old conjurer, who seems to be the only person she has any regard to. Fame reports that they are *privately married*, though I would not readily believe this of my mother, however much I have been calumniated by her. It is certain, however, that a few days ago, at a public entertainment, after drinking off a large pot of his liquor, she said a great deal of good of him: and, pretending a great zeal for freedom of *trade*, and that every body should live by their own business, she ordered her servants *to rescind the ancient orders against the practices of conjurers*; and to allow Dr. INFALLIBILITY in particular, an entire liberty of *telling fortunes, selling drugs and erecting his stage* in every market town, and performing all other parts of his profession to every person willing to employ him, in the *best and richest*

richest part of her estate, on being paid for his trouble according to ancient custom.

As the Doctor is known to deal in *poisons*, and has done a world of mischief in every family where he has been employed, this was considered as a sufficient proof, of her madness, and her blind attachment to the conjurer. The *poorer* part of her tenants however roundly told her, that they would not employ him, nor admit him, into their houses. She was obliged to yield to them, and to excuse herself to the doctor in the best manner she could, but it was thought she could not deny him any thing, if he insisted on it. Some of the other tenants encouraged by this, ventured to petition her to send the doctor a-packing again, that they might be in safety as well as their neighbors. But while they were preparing to present their petition, she hired a number of street robbers and Mohocks to disguise themselves as petitioners, and sham a quarrel in the passage; after which they
burnt

burnt two or three houses, to bring a reproach on all the conjurer's enemies. She then began to talk very big, having got this plot to succeed, —pretended to be in great fear for her safety, alledging it was extremely hard that her kindness to a poor old man, whose medicines had often done her good, should be so ill interpreted in the family ; that all the complainers were rogues who had a plot against her life, from which she had hardly escaped by arming her domestics.

After this she became very bloody, and would knock down *boys and girls of fifteen years of age* with her own hands, on pretence that they had designed to take her life, or burn her house about her ears. Nobody dares approach her, except the friends of the old conjurer, to whom she seems to be entirely devoted. Since losing her reason she has become very mischievous, and endeavours to destroy every body within her reach, especially the antient friends of her family. All her neighbours dread and hate her, and no wonder,

wonder, as she gives all of them so many causes of complaint. A neighbouring gentleman having accidentally commended me in her presence, she considered it an intolerable affront, and immediately quarrelled with him, vowed that he had conspired to ruin her, and has since that time done him all the mischief in her power.

My eldest sister LERINDA observing her grown such a tyrant at home, dreaded the effects of her fury, and remembering that she had once in her cups given away *her* estate to the old conjurer, who had almost got possession of it, by murdering a number of her people, immediately put her servants under arms, and ever since watches her house every night ; since which time, my mother has talked very civilly to her, but every body imagines that her kindness is merely superficial.

The NEIGHBOURS, finding that she spared nobody in her drunken fits, have entered in an AGREEMENT to defend themselves against her, to
hang

hang up her bullies and house-breakers, and to confine her to her house till her understanding returns. But she swears she will destroy them all, and that, though she should spend her last shilling and her heart's-blood into the bargain, she will ruin me and all my friends. The poor old woman never considers that this is not in her power, and that she has almost ruined her whole family in making the attempt.

The other day, being quite mad with rage and disappointment, she observed AN OLD FISH-WOMAN returning from the market, and she imagines every body has ill designs, she swore she was one of her enemies, that she had written me a friendly letter, and had a design to ruin her and her whole family. Immediately she ordered some of her gang of house breakers to plunder the poor woman's goods and to murder her if she made the least resistance. It would be endless to relate all her mad pranks, but the whole neighbourhood must suffer if she is not now put under confinement.

I am sorry for the accident, as she blames me for all her misfortunes, though they are entirely of her own seeking. If she were concerned in any quarrel in which a person of common honesty could take her part, I would gladly assist her; but as nothing but my ruin can satisfy her, I hope I shall not be blamed for defending myself. It grieves me to be thought an undutiful child, or a bad neighbour, but I hope the public will at last do me justice. I have suffered immense losses, yet my mother in conversation with her pick-pockets, affects to be merry with my misfortunes, and even twits me with my debts, though she owes ten times more herself, without the possibility of paying them. I hope while she is engaged in other quarrels, my people will rid me of her rascals, but it must be a considerable time before I get my losses repaired. In the mean time, I wish that some of you would do justice to the character of the unfortunate and much injured

CAMERIA.









